

AIDS TO NAVIGATION (ATON)

Action items:

- If you see an ATON discrepancy, (buoy off station, light extinguished, etc.) contact the Coast Guard. Your timely report could prevent an accident.
- If underway, contact the Puget Sound Vessel Traffic Center via VHF, or contact Coast Guard Sector Seattle by cell phone at 206-217-6001.
- If not underway, or if merely commenting on ATON, contact Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District (dpw) either by mail (Henry M. Jackson Federal Building, 915 2nd Ave, Seattle, WA 98174-1067) or by phone at 206-220-7270.

CAUTION TO BE USED IN RELIANCE UPON AIDS TO NAVIGATION

The aids to navigation depicted on charts comprise a system of fixed and floating aids that have varying degrees of reliability. Therefore, prudent mariners will not rely solely on any single aid to navigation, particularly a floating aid. With respect to buoys, the buoy symbol is used to indicate the approximate position of the buoy body and sinker, which secures the buoy to the seabed. The approximate position is used because of practical limitations in positioning and maintaining buoys and their sinkers in precise geographical locations. These limitations include, but are not limited to, inherent

imprecision in position fixing methods, prevailing atmospheric and sea conditions, the slope and the material making up the seabed, the fact that the buoys are moored to sinkers by varying lengths of chain, and the fact that buoy body and/or sinker positions are not under continuous surveillance but are normally checked only during periodic maintenance visits which may occur more than a year apart. Due to the forces of nature, the position of the buoy body can be expected to shift inside and outside the charting symbol. The mariner is also cautioned that buoys are liable to be carried away, shifted, capsized, sunk, etc. Lighted buoys may be extinguished or sound signals may not function as the result of ice, running ice or other natural causes, collisions, or other accidents. For the foregoing reasons, a prudent mariner must not rely solely upon the position or operation of floating aids to navigation, but must also use bearings from fixed objects and aids to navigation on shore. Further, a vessel attempting to pass close aboard always risks collision with a yawing buoy or with the obstruction the buoy may be marking.



The Dungeness Lighthouse, located at the tip of Dungeness Spit near Port Angeles, Wash., was the first American Lighthouse in Puget Sound. The lighthouse was established in 1857 and automated in October 1976. USCG photo.

INTERFERENCE WITH AIDS TO NAVIGATION

In accordance with Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 70.01; "No person shall obstruct or interfere with any aid to navigation established and maintained by the Coast Guard, or any private aid to navigation established and maintained in accordance with Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 64, 66, or 67. Any person violating the provisions of this section shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and be subject to a fine not exceeding the sum of \$500 for each offense, and each day during such violation shall be considered a new offense."

REQUIRED REPORTING OF DAMAGED AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Vessel operators are required to notify the Coast Guard of any marine casualty or accident, including damage or destruction of aids to navigation, by the Marine Investigation Regulations, Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Section 4.05-20, with penalty for noncompliance. Frequently, aids to navigation are struck, causing damage and displacement or complete loss, without the knowledge of the Coast Guard. The result is diminished protection for marine traffic due to the failure of vessel operators to furnish notice of these collisions to the nearest local Coast Guard unit as required by law and regulation. All vessel operators who witness another vessel or individual damage or destroy an aid to navigation, or believe an aid is not watching properly or is off station in accordance with the Coast Guard Light List, should report the incident to the nearest Coast Guard unit. The Code of Federal Regulations excerpt below provides more details on reporting discrepancies.

TITLE 33--NAVIGATION AND NAVIGABLE WATERS
CHAPTER I--COAST GUARD, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
PART 62--UNITED STATES AIDS TO NAVIGATION SYSTEM--Table of Contents
Subpart D--Public Participation in the Aids to Navigation System

Sec. 62.65 Procedure for reporting defects and discrepancies.

- (a) Mariners should notify the nearest Coast Guard facility immediately of any observed aids to navigation defects or discrepancies.
- (b) The Coast Guard cannot monitor the many thousands of aids in the U.S. Aids to Navigation System simultaneously and continuously. As a result, it is not possible to maintain every aid operating properly and on its charted position at all times. Marine safety will be enhanced if persons finding aids missing, sunk, capsized, damaged, off station, or showing characteristics other than those advertised in the Light List, or other publication, promptly inform the Coast Guard. When making the report to the Coast Guard the mariner should consult the Light List to ensure the correct geographical information is used due to the similarity of names and geographical areas.

- (c) Procedures for reporting defects and discrepancies:
 - (1) Radio messages should be prefixed "Coast Guard" and transmitted directly to a Government shore radio station listed in Chapter three of Radio Navigation Aids Publication, 117, for relay to the relevant District Commander.
 - (2) Commercial communications facilities should be used only when vessels are unable to contact a Government shore radio station. Charges for these messages will be accepted "collect" by the Coast Guard.

PROPOSED CHANGES IN AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Periodically the Coast Guard evaluates its system of aids to navigation to determine whether the conditions for which the aids were established have changed. Some of the conditions that are considered include environmental changes i.e. (shoaling), type and amount of vessel traffic, and increases in aid and equipment technology. When changes occur, the feasibility of improving, relocating, or discontinuing aids is considered. Comments on proposed changes should be addressed to: Commander (dpw), Thirteenth Coast Guard District, 915 Second Avenue, Seattle, WA 98174-1067. The Code of Federal Regulations excerpt below provides more details on the specific information that should be provided.

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Sec. 62.63 Recommendations.

- (a) The public may recommend changes to existing aids to navigation, request new aids or the discontinuation of existing aids, and report aids no longer necessary for maritime safety. These recommendations should be sent to the appropriate District Commander.
- (b) Recommendations, requests and reports should be documented with as much information as possible to justify the proposed action. Desirable information includes:
 - (1) Nature of the vessels which transit the area(s) in the question, including type, displacement, draft, and number of passengers and crew.
 - (2) Where practicable, the kinds of navigating devices used aboard such vessels (e.g., magnetic or gyro compasses, radio direction finders, radar, loran, and searchlights).
 - (3) A chartlet or sketch describing the actual or proposed location of the aid(s), and description of the action requested or recommended.

PRIVATE AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Private aids to navigation include all marine aids to navigation operated in the navigable waters of the United States other than those operated by the Federal Government or those operated in State waters for private use. No person, public body or other instrumentality not under the control of the Commandant, exclusive of the Armed Forces, shall establish and maintain, discontinue, or change or transfer ownership of any aid to maritime navigation, without first obtaining permission to do so from the Commandant; for more information consult Title 33, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 66. In order to make application to establish and maintain, discontinue, change, or transfer ownership of a private aid to navigation, a person or instrumentality shall submit a "Private Aids to Navigation Application" (CG-2554) to the Commander of the nearest Coast Guard District. To obtain a CG-2554 write Commander (dpw), Thirteenth Coast Guard District, 915 Second Avenue, Room 3510, Seattle, WA 98174-1067, or call (206) 220-7270 or go to the following website: <http://www.uscg.mil/d13/oan/paton.htm>.

POINTS OF CONTACT

To report an aid to navigation that is NOT displaying the characteristics as advertised contact the nearest Coast Guard unit or Sector Seattle VTS.

To recommend changes to navigational Aids to Navigation, submit the recommendation in writing to:

Commander, Thirteenth Coast Guard District (dpw)
915 Second Ave
Seattle WA, 98174-1067

The web address to receive and/or view the Local Notice to Mariners (LNM) and the yearly Special Local Notice to Mariners (SLNM) is <http://www.navcen.uscg.gov>. Note: The LNM and SLNM are produced only in an electronic format and no longer mailed.

Any additional questions or clarification's, The U.S. Coast Guard District Waterways Branch may be reached at (206) 220-7270 from 0730 to 1600 Mon through Fri, with the exception of federal holidays.